

Mouns Jones House Ruins
One-half mile south of U. S. Route 422,
north bank of the Schuylkill River at
the site of a former covered bridge
Douglassville
Berks County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-1032

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Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

MOUNS JONES HOUSE RUINS

Location: One-half mile south of U. S. Route 422, north bank of the Schuylkill River at the site of a former covered bridge, Douglassville, Berks County, Pennsylvania

Present Owner: Roy Schurr, RD #1, Douglassville, Pennsylvania

Present Occupant and Use: Unoccupied and unused

Brief Statement of Significance: Built in 1716, this is generally thought to be the earliest remaining building in Berks County, and is representative of the small houses built in this area at this period.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Mouns Jones and his wife Ingaborg (or Ingabo) were the original owners of the house, which stands on the south end of a 500-acre tract they took up October 21, 1701, and which was patented to them May 15, 1705. Mouns Jones was a son of a Swedish immigrant Jonas Nilsson, whose children took the name Jones. Thus, the building is sometimes called Old Swede's House. Mouns is sometimes spelled Mounce. Before 1820 the building was used for some years as a tavern and known as Lamb's Inn. The building was later included in the extensive holdings of George Douglas, for whom Douglassville is named.
2. Date of erection: A granite date stone in the upper center of the south elevation bears the legend:
I
M I
1716
The house stands at the south end of a 500-acre tract patented to Mouns Jones by William Penn in 1705.
3. Notes on alterations and additions: The house is in ruins, but there were no apparent additions or major alterations to it.
4. References:
 - a. Federal Writers' Project, Pennsylvania, A Guide to the Keystone State (New York: Oxford University Press, 1940), page 431.

- b. George M. Jones, "The Old Swedes House," The Historical Review of Berks County, vol. I, no. 4 (July 1936), pages 125-126.
 - c. Morton L. Montgomery, History of Berks County in Pennsylvania (Philadelphia: Everts, Peck and Richards, 1886), pages 944-946, 948, 953.
- B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure: Mouns Jones's father, Jonas Nilsson, was born in 1621 in Skoönings-härad, Skaraborge-län, Sweden. He immigrated in 1642 with Governor Printz, four years after the first Swedes settled in Delaware. Nilsson had been in the Royal Swedish Army and served 1642-1645 with the Swedish garrison at Fort Elfsborg. He later acquired 200 acres in Kingsessing, now southwest Philadelphia, and made his home at 77th Street and Laycock Avenue, where he lived with his wife Gertrude until his death in 1693. Nilsson became wealthy, mainly through fur trading. He is buried in the cemetery of Old Swedes Church, Gloria Dei, Philadelphia.

The Douglassville area of the Schuylkill valley was first settled 1705-1716 by Swedes from the Swedish settlements along the Delaware River, and was variously known at that time as Molatton, Malatten, or Morlatten. Mouns Jones was one of these Swedish settlers, and his house is apparently the only architectural relic of that settlement. Jones was active in local affairs, and various public events took place in his house. Visitors to the house included Conrad Weiser, and various members of the Boone and Lincoln families. A daughter of Jones married Mark Bird, the founder of the iron furnace at Hopewell.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect
National Park Service
January 1961

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This simple, small stone building is representative of the houses built in this area at this period. Its plan, characterized by one end and one corner fireplace, is a variant of the more standard center fireplace type from this area in this period, and is sometimes identified as Swedish.
2. Condition of fabric: The site of the Mouns Jones House is regularly flooded by the Schuylkill River. It is presently in ruins, with a heavy deposit of silt filling the original deep cellar and covering the first floor.

The roof and the second floor have collapsed and part of the stone gable on the east elevation has fallen.

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The structure is 20' by 34' divided into three bays, and two stories high.
2. Foundations and wall construction: Foundations and walls are of squared stone masonry. The walls are 20" thick with a 3" water table. Remains of mud and lime pargeting cover about half the wall surfaces.
3. Chimneys: The structure has two chimneys. One chimney, in the center of the west end wall, is of stone to the roof line and brick, which is possibly later, above. The second chimney is in the northeast corner of the structure; part of the chimney has fallen, apparently the top two or three feet, but the remainder is of squared stone masonry.
4. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance is in the west bay of the south elevation, with a masonry opening 3'-4" wide. The door is not in place, but, from remains found in the building, was apparently a board and batten door. Vertical joints in the stonework of the center bay on the north elevation indicate a former door opening with a masonry width of 4'-0".
 - b. Windows: The windows are not in place, but, from the remains and the masonry openings, were of various sizes and types: 2'-6" wide by 2'-9" high; 4'-3" by 3'-0"; 3'-0" by 4'-4" double hung with six-over-six light sash; and 2'-9" by 3'-2½" double casement.
5. Roof: The roof has fallen, but was a timber gabled roof with a 14 over 12 pitch.

C. Technical Description of Interiors:

1. Floor plans: In its present condition, the building is an empty shell. There is evidence that the first floor was divided by a north-south board partition into two rooms approximately equal in size. The entrance leads into what was the west room next to a winding stairway in the southwest corner of the house. A fireplace, 9'-3" wide, fills the remainder of the west wall. The east room has a diagonal fireplace in the northeast corner, which has an opening 3'-5" wide. The second floor does not exist, but, from the fallen debris, it was apparently divided by several partitions.

2. Interior finish: Among the fallen debris, are partitions of wide beaded edge boards and board and batten doors.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The structure faces south with the narrow gable ends east and west. The ground around the structure is covered with silt from the periodic flooding of the river. The area is wooded and heavily overgrown.
2. Driveways and roads: The structure formerly stood at the north end of a covered bridge over the Schuylkill River. Only the foundations to the bridge are still in place, and the approaches have been abandoned.

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